

H.R. 4900, Telehealth Across State Lines Act

Sponsored by Reps. Phil Roe, M.D. (R-TN) and David Kustoff (R-TN)

Encourages Innovative Care Delivery in Rural Areas

Background:

Rural America faces health care delivery challenges, and telehealth can help ensure patients in rural areas still receive high-quality care. Providers in rural areas can consult with expert providers to answer urgent questions. For instance, a neurologist could help an advance-trained EMT determine if a patient is having a stroke and what steps to take before the patient can reach the nearest hospital. Experts can also provide follow-up care via telehealth, saving patients lengthy drives while still allowing them to receive treatment at leading medical centers such as the Cleveland Clinic.

This bill would create uniform, national best practices for the provision of telehealth across state lines. It also includes a five-year grant program to incentivize the expansion of effective telehealth programs to reach rural communities. Lastly, it would authorize the creation of a new payment system to incentivize the adoption of telehealth.

The Bill:

- Instructs the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to initiate a rulemaking to create federal telehealth program best practices.
 - The Secretary should consult with range of stakeholders, including technology experts, primary care providers, specialists, surgeons, academic medical center, emergency medicine providers, federal agencies with expertise in this area, and more.
 - The Secretary must report on the progress of the rulemaking to the Congressional committees of jurisdiction.
- Creates a grant program to incentivize the expansion of effective telehealth programs to reach rural communities. To qualify, applications should:
 - Be an existing telehealth program
 - Run by a health care center of excellence such as an academic medical center
 - Have a planned expansion to a rural community as defined by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy
- Instructs the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) to create a model to incentivize the adoption of telehealth in order to increase access to care in rural areas.

The National Rural Health Association supports the Telehealth Across State Lines Act.

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